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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

31 May 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Reactions to the Forcing of the Strait of Tiran

Problem: To analyze the reactions of the UAR and the USSR to the forcing of the Strait of Tiran by a naval escort force representing the US in association with other countries.

1. Our estimate is that Nasser, if faced with a naval escort force bent on going through the Tiran Strait, would probably avoid firing at it. UAR objectives would be to make the US appear as the aggressor, by the very fact of forcing its way through the Strait in this manner. Thus it would probably permit the convoyed vessels through under protest, and then rely on political and propagandistic moves in the UN and other forums to limit further risks of conflict and reap political rewards as the offended party. We believe that Nasser would consider that he could refrain from engaging such a force and still exploit the opportunities it would afford for political and propaganda purposes.

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2. The USSR has given Nasser strong diplomatic support in the current crisis and is clearly pleased with most developments thus far. But the Soviets have stopped short of endorsing the UAR's position on the blockade itself. They probably hope that they can maintain an ambiguous position, at least so long as the consequences of the blockade remain uncertain. In any case, we believe that the Soviets would advise Nasser to refrain from an engagement with any Western naval escort forces forcing the Gulf and would not provide any direct military support should the UAR decide to act counter to such advice.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES.

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for SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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